

## and way down we go

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by [swimthewholeriogrande](#)

### Notes

This is obviously an extremely sensitive topic so please pay attention to tags and only read if you're able to x

Title from Way Down We Go by Kaleo

In some fucked-up icing on the cake kind of way, it's Romero who finds him.

Jake feels like he's been on the gross, wet shower floor forever. He's still dressed, mostly, but his bland brown trowers are unbuttoned and halfway down his legs, trapping his knees; it hurts where he doesn't want to think about.

He's tired. It hurts *so* much.

When Romero lays a hand on his shoulder, Jake gets the fright of his life, and jerks away despite the fire that shoots through his lower back. His fingers scramble in the grout. He tries to pull away and Romero takes his wrist, whistles lowly.

"Someone did a real number on you, huh, kid." The other man's voice is not unkind. Jake screws his eyes shut, overwhelmingly aware of how exposed he is, and tries not to cry.

"I -" he tries to explain it away, and Romero just clicks his tongue and pulls Jake to his feet. He's shaking, badly, and his knees buckle; Romero huffs and grabs Jake's elbow roughly to steady him.

"You're fine, kid. S'alright."

Jake pulls his pants up. His hands are trembling so hard he can't do the button. He's dimly aware that he's in shock, but he's inches away from a murderer, and he can't let his guard down even now. "Thank you," he mutters. When he meets Romero's eyes fleetingly, they're still hard, still cruel, but at least it's a person who kinda cares if he lives or dies. Jake wants comfort; he knows he won't get it.

"Go to your cell," Romero advises. "Get some sleep."

Jake stumbles away in a haze. He doesn't know how he gets to his cell, or why Caleb isn't there, but he crashes heavily onto the bed and the ceiling spins. His heartbeat staggers in his ears. It hurts so much.

Infirmery, he thinks blearily, and then he thinks that he'd rather die than have another person ever touch him again. He rolls onto his side and swallows bile when the movement makes pain flare through his body. This is alright. He is alright.

Amy's face grins at him from the photo on his wall, blissfully unaware and so many miles away from him. Jake is shaking too hard for it to be safe. He lifts his fingers and they blur with the motion. He wants and is simultaneously terrified of the idea of Amy holding his hand.

But it's okay. It's okay.

-

Exactly ten months after that night - not that Jake's been counting, every night, staring at the ceiling - he is doing much better. He told Amy because he doesn't keep anything from her, and he told his therapist because Henry is pretty good at getting it out of him, but no one else knows. No one else can ever know.

Then ten months after that night Terry comes up behind him and lays a hand on his back, between his shoulderblades, his finger just brushing the back of Jake's neck, and then Jake isn't doing so well after all.

He freezes up for a second, and as Terry starts to ask what's wrong Jake whirls around and punches him, hard, the element of surprise actually allowing him to put some real force behind it. Terry takes a step back, swearing, and Jake skitters into the wall a few feet behind him like a spooked animal. It takes a moment of his fingernails scraping the plaster before he registers that it's not moulding white tile, that the water in his eyes is only tears and not freezing filthy showerspray.

"Oh, God," he starts, the words tripping in his throat, still stuck fast to the wall, "Sarge, I'm so sorry, I -"

Terry is staying back, but Jake gets the sense that it's more for his benefit than Terry's. "It's fine, Jake," he says reassuringly, "didn't even leave a mark. I shouldn't have crept up on you like that."

Jake swallows hard. He knows he's shaking again, and he knows Terry can probably see it. "Prison stuff," he blurts in lieu of an explanation, and Terry's expression is the perfect balance of compassion without being the pity Jake is so sick of.

"Okay," he replies, calm and quiet. "Do you need me to do anything?"

He's barely finished the last word before Jake, unable to help himself, throws himself at Terry. He wraps his arms around Terry's middle and hugs, hard, and Terry returns it without a word, his huge frame making Jake feel small in a good way for once. They stand like that for a long time. Jake stops shaking.

Comfort, it seems, can never come too late.

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